

Orphans and other vulnerable children are deprived of the single most important factor in their lives—their family or their parents.

By 2010, an estimated 106 million children under age 15 are projected to lose one or both parents. Among them, the number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS is expected to jump to more than 25 million.

These orphans and other vulnerable children now live throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Conflict has orphaned or separated 1 million children from their families in the 1990s.

H.R. 4061 would help communities to ensure that orphans and other vulnerable children have a secure and healthy childhood by providing essential services, such as basic care, health services including treatment for children with HIV/AIDS, mental health care, school food programs, and job training.

Orphans and other vulnerable children are not especially visible because millions of children are dispersed over many families, in communities where the hardships of individual children are lost from sight.

H.R. 4061 will increase access to needed services, ensure parity for orphans and other vulnerable children and build local capacity for effective decentralization and targeting of services as well as multisectoral coordination among service providers.

H.R. 4061 would allow for school fees to be waived providing a free basic education policy for millions of orphans and vulnerable children, many of whom had never enrolled in school or had dropped out because they simply could not afford the school fees.

Due to their status, these children are often most vulnerable and at risk of becoming victims of violence, exploitation, trafficking, discrimination or other abuses. Unaccompanied girls are at especially high risk of sexual abuse.

Children orphaned by AIDS are themselves particularly vulnerable to infection because they often have no one to care for or protect them, or any means of earning a living.

A 2001 report by the International Crisis Group found that “young people with no job, no income, and no family to support them are at risk of joining, or being abducted by local militias.”

A young Sierra Leone youth told an audience at the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Children, “We want a better life. We want peace. We are counting on your governments and the UN’s continued support for help.”

H.R. 4061 would provide the help this young boy so desperately needs. I urge full passage of this amendment.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for this wonderful bill; we look forward to its passage; and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4061, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

JOBS AND THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the President of the United States made another trip to my State of Ohio to argue for and try to justify his economic policy.

Ohio has lost one out of six manufacturing jobs since George Bush took office. Ohio has lost almost 200 jobs every single day of the Bush administration. Yet the President’s answer invariably is more tax cuts for the wealthiest people, the most privileged people in the country, hoping that it trickles down and creates jobs. His other answer is more trade agreements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement, that continue to send jobs, continuing to hemorrhage jobs out of the country.

Mr. Speaker, instead of these failed economic policies that have cost Ohio more than 200,000 jobs, we need to extend unemployment benefits, pass Crane-Rangel that actually gives benefits and rewards those companies that manufacture in the United States rather than giving tax breaks to those companies that continue to ship jobs overseas.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

ENERGY LEGISLATION NEEDED NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, often perception does not match reality. I believe that this is true in regard to our present economy.

Many would characterize the economy as very poor. However, as we can see on the following chart, short-term interest rates are the lowest in 40 years; inflation, according to the Producer Price Index, was 1.5 percent over the last 12 months; productivity expanded 5 percent the last four quarters, the highest in 20 years; manufacturing employment reached a 30-year high in May with orders up for manufacturing; and home ownership was 68.6 percent last quarter, which is a record.

All of these things would indicate a strong economy, so what is the problem? Why do people continually talk about what a bad economy we have? I would say that probably the main con-

cern that we hear is simply what one of the previous speakers referred to, unemployment.

I would like to call attention to the fact that during the 1970s, the unemployment rate was 6.2 percent for that 10-year average; during the 1980s, it was 7.3 percent; during the 1990s, it was 5.8 percent; and, today, in 2004, it stands at 5.6 percent. We added 248,000 new jobs to the economy in the month of May, and during the last 9 months of consecutive growth, we have added 1.5 million jobs to the economy.

Certainly this 5.6 percent rate is considerably lower than the 30-year average of 6.4 percent. Currently unemployment in the European Union runs 9 to 10 percent. So we see some remarkable gains, and it appears that even though we would hope that unemployment would be zero, we are at least moving certainly in the right direction.

This does not mean that the economy is not without challenge. We feel that there is one significant issue that needs to be dealt with, and that is the issue of energy policy. This is well within the purview and the domain of this particular body.

Currently we have higher energy prices, which affects trucking, airlines, agriculture, small business, manufacturing and individuals. Yet we cannot get an energy bill passed, even though there is widespread agreement on most of the provisions in the bill. I am going to put some of those issues up here that we think are a matter of considerable consensus.

In the energy bill that has been passed by the House and the Senate, yet we cannot get a conference report agreed upon, is the renewable fuel standard, which provides for wind energy, solar energy, ethanol, biodiesel, hydro, all environmentally friendly and will move us away from energy dependence upon OPEC. Also hydrogen fuel cell development is critical. This is environmentally friendly and is not dependent on petroleum.

The Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline, we have all kinds of natural gas available in our country today, particularly in Alaska, and we cannot access it, so this pipeline is critical to reducing natural gas prices, which are eating us up at the present time.

Finally, incentives to increase energy production. We have shut down our exploration and energy production, and that has certainly hurt the economy.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the economy is strong, and Congress can fix the biggest obstacle to a period of sustained growth, the lack of a comprehensive energy policy. We can continue to blame the other party, Republicans blame Democrats, Democrats blame Republicans, we can blame the other body, they can blame us. We can do all of the finger pointing we want out there, but the buck really stops here. It is our responsibility, and the American people have every right to expect Congress to put the country’s welfare ahead of partisanship.